

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for consideration of the Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement(s), and for acknowledgement of receipt of the certified priority document.

Applicants respectfully note that the drawings have not been considered by the Examiner. Review and acknowledgement that the drawings are approved by the Examiner are respectfully solicited.

Claims 1-8 are pending in the application. Claims 1-3 and 6 have been rejected. Claims 4, 5, 7 and 8 have been objected to. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled. Claims 1 and 4-8 herewith are amended. Favorable reconsideration of the application in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 4-5, 7 and 8 have been objected to under 37 CFR 1.75(c) as being improper form, because a multiple dependent claim cannot depend upon another multiple dependent claim. The rejection is traversed. Applicants respectfully made necessary amendments to the claims in accordance with the Examiner's comments in the Office Action. These amendments are deemed to now conform the claims to the requirements of the rules.

Relying on 35 U.S.C. 102(b), the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3/1 and 6 as being anticipated by Suzuki et al. (US 6,173,150). Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejection, and request reconsideration. Applicants respectfully submit that Suzuki et al. does not disclose all the restrictive features of their invention as claimed in amended claims 1 and 6, from which amended claims 4, 5 on the one hand and claims 7, 8 on the other hand respectively depend on. Applicants respectfully submit that Suzuki et al. does not disclose, as in amended claim 1, a method for electrically discharging a printing material to which toner has been applied with a discharge device wherein an electrical energy is applied on respectively individual strips of a series of strips dividing the printing material on the upper side and /or the

underside of said printing material, one strip corresponding approximately to the width of the discharge device and extending from one longitudinal side to the opposite longitudinal side of the printing material. Applicants also respectfully submit that Suzuki et al. does not disclose, as in amended claim 6, a discharge device for electrically discharging a printing material to which toner has been applied, the discharge device comprising a control device for electrically discharging individual strips of a series of strips dividing the printing material, the width of the discharge device corresponding approximately to one individual strip of said series of strips dividing the printing material, and the discharge device extending at least across the width of the printing material. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection of the amended claims under 35 U.S.C. 102(b).

Moreover, Suzuki et al. discloses separation means for facilitating separation of a recording medium from an image bearer bearing a toner image, in order to avoid poor separability between a transfer material (recording medium) having the toner image transferred thereon, and a latent image bearer (such as a photosensitive drum). Suzuki et al. discloses that these separation means also avoid re-transfer of the toner to the photosensitive drum (see, e.g. in Suzuki: column 1, lines 65-67; column 5, lines 8-10, lines 18-22 and lines 23-36; column 6, lines 1-10).

By analogy with the invention of the present application, Suzuki et al. only discloses, without more detailed information, that an unnecessary electric charge applied to a reverse surface of a transfer material having a toner image is removed by a separating charger. To this end, the potential of the transfer material is set to about zero volt (see, in Suzuki: column 4, lines 44-47 and figure 2E). However, Suzuki et al. not only discloses means different from the invention of the present application, but Suzuki et al. teaches away from the invention of the present application, and indeed would have deterred one person skilled in the art to modify the image forming apparatus of Suzuki et al. to arrive, without inventiveness, to the

invention of the present application. This is because, contrary to the invention claimed in the present application, Suzuki et al. discloses that the voltage is applied according to the image ratio calculated in the vicinity of the transfer material leading edge in a predetermined area firstly detected. This predetermined area is, for example, in a range up to 50 mm from the conveying direction leading edge of the transfer material (see, e.g., in Suzuki: column 5, lines 50-56; column 5, line 65 to column 6, line 41 and figures 5A, 5B). In Suzuki et al., only the image ratio of the transfer material leading edge is read, and an appropriate difference current is applied so as to the transfer material leading edge can be separated without causing the re-transfer (see, e.g., in Suzuki: column 6, lines 11-17) or without causing the poor separability (see, e.g., in Suzuki: column 6, lines 29-34). Therefore, toner areas placed outside of the predetermined area are not considered when calculating the image ratio and therefore the voltage to completely discharge the printing material in relation to these last toner areas is not taught in Suzuki et al..

In fact the problem solved by the invention of the present application is not evoked or recognized in Suzuki et al.: it is the incomplete electrical discharge of a printing material having a toner image, even after having discharged it by means of a discharge device. Moreover, and contrary to Suzuki et al., in the present application the whole printing material must be discharged completely, notably in taking into account the toner areas having high densities (see, in the present application: page 3, lines 28-30; page 4, lines 5-9). These last toner areas can be placed anywhere on the printing material (see, in the present application: areas 4, 6, 8, 40, 60 on figures 3-5).

In view thereof, it follows that the subject matter of the amended claims would not have been obvious of Suzuki et al. (US 6,173,150) at the time the invention was made.

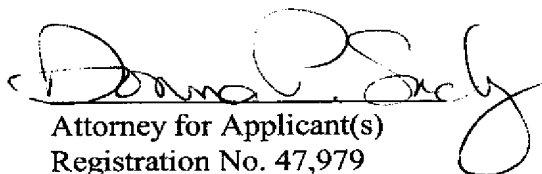
Claims 2 and 3/2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Suzuki et al. (US 6,173,150). The rejection is traversed. Claims 2 and 3/2 have been canceled. Applicants therefore

respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 2 and 3/2 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

In view of the foregoing remarks and amendments, the claims are now deemed allowable and such favorable action is courteously solicited in the form of a Notice of Allowance.

Should the Examiner require anything further, or have any questions necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, the favor is requested of a telephone call to the undersigned representative for the purpose of discussing such amendments.

Respectfully submitted,


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If the Examiner is unable to reach the Applicant(s) Attorney at the telephone number provided, the Examiner is requested to communicate with Eastman Kodak Company Patent Operations at (585) 477-4656.